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# TORQUE TUBE

THE NEWS PUBLICATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE 1937-1938 BUICK CLUB



VOLUME XV • NUMBER 4 • MARCH / APRIL 1997

**BUICK**  
**1937**  **1938**

# TORQUE TUBE

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## THE 9th CYLINDER

By HARRY LOGAN #651 • Editor

**Congratulations to our Club!** Our membership is now up to **514 paying members**, so we've got the same number members as all of last year. We should end this publishing year (August 31) with more members than ever before!

This top photo of new member **Anthony Wright** (#1192) and his '37 Century 4-Door Sedan Model 61 was taken in downtown Saugerties, NY. Anthony lives in New York City and stores his car in the Saugerties area. He says the '37 "laughs at some of the steep mountain roads in the area that are such a pleasure to drive."

He bought his 37-61 last year in Massachusetts and has added seat belts, turn signals and a six-volt alternator for safer and more reliable motoring. Anthony also owns a '39 Century Coupe Model 665 which he keeps near his apartment in NYC.



Anthony highly recommends this paperback book (bottom photo) "**The Restless Decade**" (Abrams) with the noted German photographer John Gutmann's photographs of the troubled Thirties. It features excellent photographs of the '30's taken throughout the USA.

The first chapter is "**Automobile Culture in the USA**."

It has many car scenes, one shows new 1937 Buicks being transported through the Loop section of Chicago and is reproduced on page 12 of this **Torque Tube**.

The book has nearly 175 photos and presents a new view of America during the 1930's. Unlike the well-known Farm Security Administration photographs of dust bowls and bread lines, Gutmann's images proclaim that throughout the United States life went on in all its passionate diversity. It retails

**The Restless Decade**

**JOHN GUTMANN'S  
PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE THIRTIES**



FOUNDED IN 1980 BY DAVE LEWIS



for \$19.95, but you can buy it a little cheaper at Crown Books. Ask your dealer.

Anthony also writes: "I would like to tell you how fond of the Torque Tube I have become! It always cheers me up to receive the latest issue. The technical tips are very helpful and fascinating and the personal stories along with the historical photos add another wonderful perspective." Thanks for the kind words Anthony.

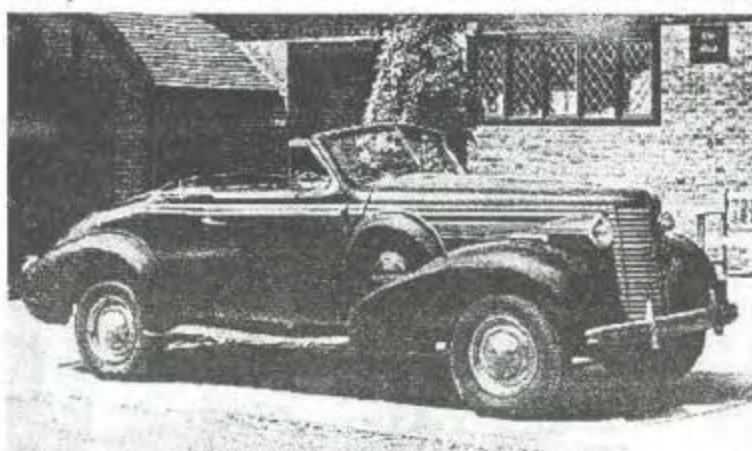
**Wayne Yonce** (#1034) reports that you can buy **WHEEL BOLTS** used on 1934 to 1950 Buicks from NAPA stores. Take your old wheel bolts in as a guide. Thanks for the tip Wayne.

Club members sometimes need to repair or replace their hand brake cable (*top photo*). I just purchased this Dorman brand Brake Cable Repair Kit 705-075 at the local auto parts store. I haven't used it yet, but I will try it out the next time I have a broken



for sharing the auction results.

The 1938 Buick sedan (*top of page 3*) was photographed in Havana, Cuba. Cuba is in a time warp car-wise as no U.S. autos have been imported since the late 1950's (*before Castro*). This sedan, probably a Special, has a sealed beam headlight conversion, turn signals, fog lights and an after-market grille guard. The two bumper guards are



## TORQUE TUBE

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missing. It also has the original engine, upholstery but with a speedometer out of a Russian Lada. The photo is from the book **"Cars of Cuba."** The book says: "Cubans love having their car photographed. The owner of this Buick became so excited at the prospect of having his 59 year old car immortalized in the book that he worked two days straight getting it running again. Even his wife got all dressed up for the big event."

Thanks to **José Pardo** (#558) in Colombia for sharing this photo. José thinks we may have a new member once freedom comes to Cuba.

These Buick songs never made the hit parade of 1938, but instead were a promotional idea. Here are some of the lyrics:

### **BUICK THEME SONG**

(TUNE: "Put On Your Old Gray Bonnet")

There is a gay new bonnet  
With the name Buick on it  
It's the smartest thing that's  
out today  
With this handsome honey  
We'll be in the money  
In the good old Buick way.

### **BUICK, BUICK**

(TUNE: "East Side, West Side")

Buick, Buick  
All around the town  
They all say "Better Buy Buick"  
That's the word that's going 'round  
It's a snappy stepper  
It's got a panther-smooth gait  
It tops them all whether  
large or small  
This Dynaflash Straight-Eight.

Maybe **Al Pavlik** (#62) will play these songs on the piano at the Eastern Meet evening sing-along next June?

These Buick songs are from the literature col-

lection of **Jerry Barton** (#281) in Washington. Thanks Jerry.



family since new when it was purchased by his grandfather. After he died, it was owned by fam-

ily members and garaged in Wyoming. Jerry's mother has been storing the car since 1963. After her death, Jerry shipped the car to Michigan. He plans on having it rewired, repainted and rechromed as that's about all it needs. Welcome to the Club Jerry.

We did a story in the September/October 1996 **Torque Tube** on the 1938 Century Sedan Model 61 purchased a year ago by **Walter Fowler** (#1195) in New York. He recently wrote to say: "In the glove box of my '38 Century I found a Pennsylvania antique registration card. The previous owner told me it was there when he got the car, but that he never tried to contact the previous owners.

On the chance that I might get some information on the history of the car, I wrote to the addresses on the card. About a month later I received a note from a gentleman in Mansfield, PA. who had been the fourth owner and that the car was

purchased new by the then Bank President in Mansfield. He sold it to the second owner, a foundry worker who used it to drive to work.

He sold it to the third owner, the county Tax Collector who 'Got into the wine one night' and hit a pole dead center, damaging the grille and bumper.

The fourth owner, then a farmer, bought it and used it to haul a trailer on his farm rather than buy a truck. When he gave up farming, he put antique license plates on it and only drove during the summer. A passerby (the fifth owner) 'got it away from him' about 20 years ago. He was responsible for the minor restoration required to put it in the fine condition it is in today.

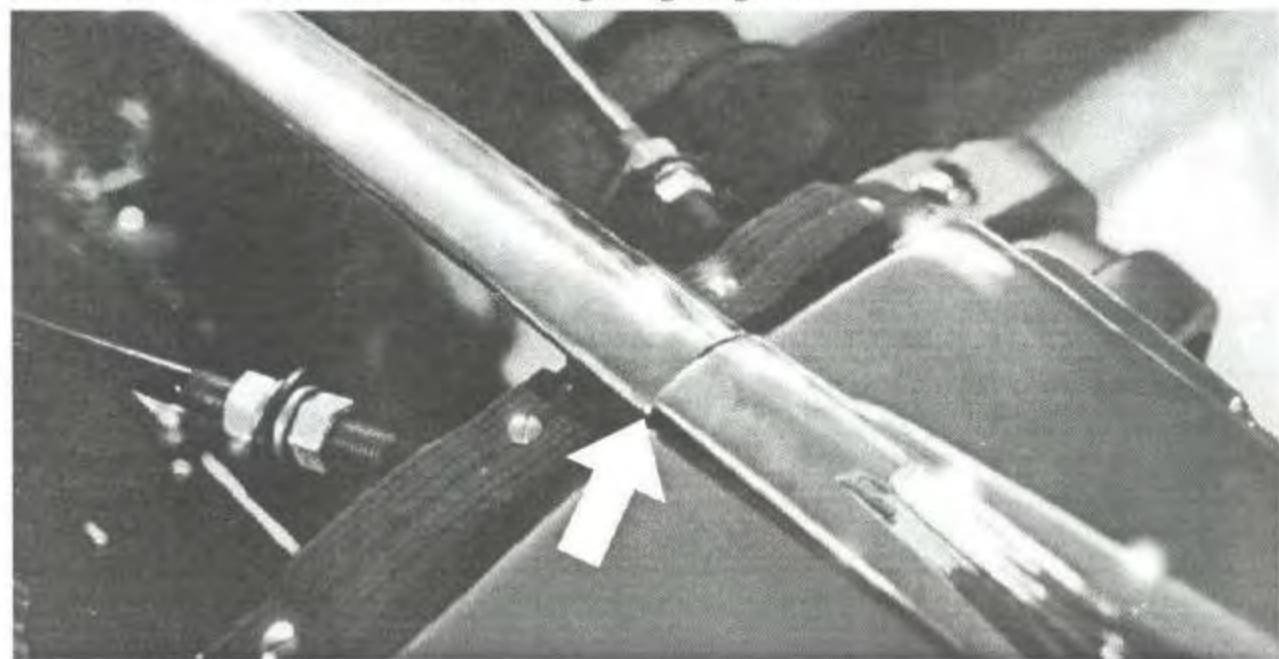
I have the names of all the owners except the 'passerby' (fifth) owner which makes me the seventh owner. Can you imagine using one of today's luxury cars on a farm?"

Some of our members have asked about the center hood strip and how they were made. The center hood strip was originally a stainless skin over an iron core. The stainless skin often gets

damaged, so many members remove it and have the iron core rechromed. After rechroming the center hood strip and having the stainless nose piece straightened, you may find the ends do not have the same shape where they meet when put on the car as shown in this photo below. You may have to have the ends reshaped so they match. Also, there will be a slight difference in color between the chromed center strip and the stainless nose piece.

One of our members had his 1938 motor professionally (?) rebuilt and they put the pistons in backwards! Make sure your pistons are installed with the scalloped or dished-out side of the piston (the low side of the dome) facing the camshaft or spark plug side of the motor.

This middle photo showing a '38 Buick, being washed, appeared in the October, 1940 Motor Age magazine. The caption reads: "A \$50,000 car washing plant uses a conveyor system that steams, washes, cleans, rubs and dries cars in 15 minutes." Note the large triangular aftermarket grille guard.



**Bill Whyte** (#968) in Scotland writes: "I note in the Nov./Dec. issue of the Torque Tube that some of our overseas members are finding it expensive to pay for their magazine subscription in American dollars. I would suggest that they follow my course and make a deposit in an American bank. In my case the Chase Manhattan bank in New York. This gives you a check book which can be used in most states, but not a credit card as this requires American residency. My British credit card also works well in



OK. Matt recently bought the car from former member Dan Burroghs. It won an award at last year's BCA National Meet in Texas.

This beautiful cream 1938 Special Convertible Coupe Model 46C (top of page 6) belongs to new member **Matt Davis** (#1261) in Tulsa,



America, giving a very good rate of exchange. It is a General Motors Master Card. An American bank account for paying only the Torque Tube subscription does not make sense, but overseas members will find that goods in general in the American market can be much cheaper, and as all Buick parts are sourced in America, this checking account can be very useful."

Because we have a few members who own 1938 Buicks with the semi-automatic transmission, I've included several articles in this issue on these cars. The self-shifting transmission was also used on some 1937 to 1939 Oldsmobiles.

Buick was selected by GM to build the unit, but they were never very enthusiastic about it. The transmission was pretty much of a failure, but this was probably partially due to the failure of the owners to learn how to operate it properly. There are very few of the 1938 self-

disconnect them from the car in case there is some small electrical draw that would run the battery down over time.

A new device for saving batteries is the charger/maintainer. These devices (middle of page 6) are used like a battery charger only they are left on all the time, maintaining the battery at full charge without overcharging it. This prevents the battery from self-discharging with the resulting permanent loss of capacity that no standard charger can replace.

These "maintenance" chargers come in 6 or 12 volt models. VDC Electronics, the manufacturer of this model, is offering the Club a special price of \$29.95 (a \$15 savings) plus shipping and handling. Their offer is good until June 30th. Call them in New Jersey at this toll free number (800) 379-5579 if you're interested. Their address is: **VDC Electronics, Inc.** 83 Cedar Lane, Englewood, NJ 07631.

shifters left. Many were converted to standard floor shifters by Buick dealers.

After Buick's fling with the self-shifter in 1938, it did not return to the automatic transmission until the first Dynaflow automatic transmission in 1949.

#### Batteries need attention too.

Nothing is worse for a lead acid battery than long intervals of nonuse. They should be fully charged when stored and full with water. It's not a bad idea to

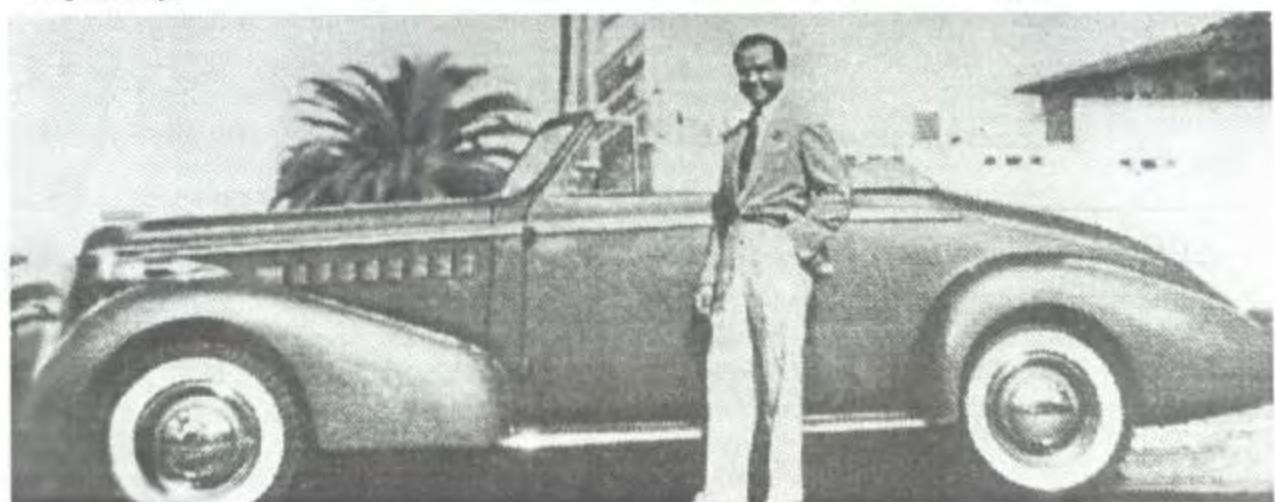


This new 1937 convertible coupe (below) belonged to suave Jimmy Manos, the popular maitre d'hotel of the Ambassador in Los Angeles. According to a 1937 Buick magazine, he had this to say about his new car: "When I bought Tillie, my new Buick, the hotel went wild with jealousy."



### Walter Miller

(#1093) has a large selection of '37-'38 Buick sales brochures, manuals, factory photos, etc. If you're interested, send him a stamped envelope for a free list. Specify year. His address is 6710 Brooklawn, Syracuse, NY 13211 or phone (315) 432-8282.



Here is another bit of information on firewall I.D. tags and what those numbers mean. U.S. made Buicks were produced only in Flint, MI in 1935. Then the South Gate, CA assembly plant started producing cars in October of 1936. The Linden, NJ plant was added in April of 1937.

1937-1938 Production figures were:

	<u>1937</u>	<u>1938</u>
Flint	191,554	130,141
South Gate	20,069	13,228
Linden	<u>8,723</u>	<u>25,320</u>
Total	220,346	168,689

It now becomes easy to tell why you see very few cars today produced at either South Gate or Linden. They built very few vehicles for the 1937 and 1938 model years.

Models Produced:

1937

Linden	41, 46S & 48
South Gate	41, 44, 46, 46S, 47, 48, 61, 64, 66S, 67 & 68

1938

Linden	41, 44, 46, 46S, 47, 48, 61, 66S, 67 & 68
South Gate	41, 44, 46, 46S, 47, 48, 61, 66S & 67

Note that these two plants only built 40 and 60 series (*Special & Century*) cars. They did **not** build open cars or Roadmasters or Limiteds. These were produced **only** by the Flint plant. So the frame number on all 1938 open cars, Roadmasters and Limiteds should begin with a "**1**". All 1937 and 1938 open cars, Roadmasters and Limiteds should have a firewall data plate Body No. with digits only (without a "**C**" or "**L**" preceding the number). Thanks to Buick Historian Terry Dunham for this information.

For example, this next photo shows what **Von Hardesty's** (#964) Flint assembled '37 Century Convertible Coupe's ID tag looks like. It reads:

**1937 MOD. 66C  
STYLE NO. 37-4667  
BODY NO. 796**

(out of 843 made, 787 for US and 56 for export)

**TRIM NO. 349** (Red leather)

**PAINT NO. 503** (Sandringham Maroon)



Like all firewall data plates, it was originally painted body color, but most of the paint has now worn off. This '38 Special Sport Coupe Model 46S (middle photo) has never been restored. It has been stored for many years and still has its original *Corot Beige* paint (#522). Note the firewall data plate is painted, not silver.



Also this 1937 promotional photo (below) shows the car with a painted firewall data plate.



*Harry*

# Cover Cars

The front cover shows a 1938 Roadmaster wearing 1937 Michigan Dealer plates with accessory license plate frames. On the original GM archival photo, under a magnifying glass, I can see that the "8" in the bumper badge is darker than the stripe through it and the background of the raised chromed "BUICK" letters. This supports the paint color idea that the "8" was black and the other color red. Red and black are the colors on the NOS bumper badge owned by **Paul Cusano** (#52). The rear cover shows the view you'd see if you were following a '38 Roadmaster. Note chrome window reveal moulding, used only on Roadmaster's and Limiteds. The back cover photo also shows the trunk lid, again under magnification, you can see that there is **No** rubber "pad" under the emblem but there is under the trunk handle mechanism. Also note the round factory tag with the number 18 attached to both the front and rear license plates.

## 1937-1938 EASTERN CLUB MEET Saugatuck, Michigan - June 5 - 7, 1997

### **Headquarters:** Timberline Motel

Blue Star Hwy., Saugatuck, Michigan  
(1-800-257-2147)

Owners: Herb & Eva Klemm

### **Weekend rates:**

Queen size bed - \$75.00 per night  
Two double beds - \$85.00 per night

### **Note:**

Rates are \$10.00 less for mid week days.  
Please make your reservations directly with the Timberline Motel and we suggest you do so as early as possible to avoid the last minute rush.

### **Thursday, June 5:** Check in at Motel



**Friday, June 6:** A tour is being planned to Gilmore's Red Barn, Hickory Corners, MI. This is a fabulous collection of cars! Jesse and Sandy Cahue will host the tour.

**Saturday, June 7:** Hopefully time will allow for harbor tours, a tour of the Ferry Keewatin and perhaps time in Holland, Michigan or shopping in Saugatuck. Saturday night we will dine at the "Avalon" Restaurant where you may order from the menu. This region of Michigan is rich in things to do, so you may want to extend your trip in order to take advantage of this beautiful area. Trust us! **Marv and Phyllis**

### REGISTRATION FORM

Name:			
Address:			
City:	State:	Zip:	
Car:	Number in Party:		
Date of Arrival:			

Registration Fee is \$5.00 per car. Please send check to:

**Marv Rhynard**  
**15330 Pinehurst Dr.**  
**Lansing, Michigan 48906**  
**Phone: 517-484-5188**

# 1937-1938 WESTERN CLUB MEET

Mount Hood & the Columbia River Gorge  
September 19, 20 and 21, 1997



Treat yourself to a trip you'll always remember....enjoy the pristine beauty of Oregon from your Buick! (Modern cars and hitchhikers welcome too) Your hosts are Doug Nelson (#51) and Harry Logan (#651).

**Thursday, Sept. 18th:** Southern cruisers traveling north will gather in Salem.

**LODGING:** •Phoenix Inn, Salem, OR

4370 Commercial St. S.E. (1-503-588-9220)

- Newer motel with pool and continental breakfast included. Mention the '37-'38 Club when you make your room reservations from the block of rooms reserved for us.

**Friday, Sept. 19th:** After breakfast we'll follow **Doug and Kay Nelson** (#51) to their home. Tour of their shop, showroom & old cars. Cruise old Hwy. 99E to the town of Aurora for antique shopping.

**LODGING:** •Edgefield Bed & Breakfast,

Troutdale, OR (1-800-669-8610)

- Cozy, turn-of-the-century decor includes Breakfast on this 25 acre historic estate with Winery, fine dining & gardens.

**ALTERNATIVE LODGING:** •Phoenix Inn,

Troutdale, OR (503-669-6500)

**4:00 pm:** Southern group joins Northwesterners with ample time to check out all of the beautiful '37-'38 Buicks and make new and meet old friends.

**Saturday, Sept. 20th:** This is the day for breathtaking scenery! After breakfast, we'll tour the famous Columbia River Hwy to Crown Point for the best view of the river. Cross over to the Washington side to visit Maryhill Museum.  
....not your average museum!

**LODGING:**

**Timberline Lodge, Mt. Hood, OR (1-800-547-1406)**

- The lodge was completed in 1937 at the 6,000 ft. level of Oregon's highest mountain. The lodge was built with tons of native stone, wrought iron and hand-hewn beams of Douglas Fir. President Franklin Roosevelt dedicated the lodge, calling it "a monument to the skill and faithful performance of the workers" who built it. From the lodge you will be able to see snow on the mountain and late season skiers on the slopes.

**Sunday, Sept. 21st:** After breakfast, we will head down the mountain toward Portland. Those who will be traveling South again can go to the Nelson's in Salem for a catered picnic lunch. If you didn't see all there was to see you can continue the tour of their shop, showroom and old cars.

**Note:**

- Get reservations in **ASAP** or you'll miss out!
- Call Doug Nelson if you have any questions: (503-399-0647)
- Alternative Friday accommodations in Troutdale: **Phoenix Inn (503-669-6500)**
- Registrants will receive a letter with additional facts, times, etc.

**Come and join this West Coast Tour with other  
'37-'38 Buick Club Members  
for an unforgettable tour of Oregon.**

— REGISTRATION FORM —

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Car: \_\_\_\_\_ Adults: \_\_\_\_\_ Children: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Arrival: **Thursday, September 18th, Salem**  **or Friday, September 19th, Troutdale**   
**We will**  **We will not**  be attending the Sunday, September 21st, box lunch at the Nelson's. The cost will be \$5.00 per person so please send check along with this registration form to Doug Nelson. If you are **not** going to attend the box lunch on Sunday, September 21st, please just send this form only to:

**Doug Nelson**

**781 Hylo Road S.E., Salem, OR 97305**

**Phone: 503-399-0647**

# An Opportunity of a Lifetime

By Geoff Hilliard-Melborne, Australia

In October, 1995, I was lucky enough to hear about the 1996 Fiva World Rally celebrating 100 years of British motoring. The rally was being sponsored by the Rover Car Group and invitations were being offered to overseas car enthusiasts, with free return sea-freight.

After sending my letter of inquiry, I received an invitation. The 9 day rally was to be held in June, starting from Edinburgh, Scotland, ending at Stratford-Upon-Avon, England.

We entered our 1936 Century Sedan which would be reliable and comfortable for touring. We arranged for the car to be shipped over in mid-March to arrive in England on May 4th. This allowed us to tour the UK for 5 weeks before the rally.

The first week of our stay was at Eton College with my daughter's in-laws Susan and Brian. We were made welcome and shown Eton College including the 500 year old chapel.

After a week in the UK, we collected our car from Customs. The Buick was out of the container awaiting collection, much to my surprise. After connecting the battery, checking the oil and water and looking for shipping damage (none), I was pleased how easy the engine started.

Some two hours later after many traffic hold-ups and getting lost twice, we reached the outskirts of London and the M4 Motorway. We had a 300 mile trip ahead of us to reach our destination, a little village in Cornwall where Susan and Brian had a holiday bungalow. We spent a busy week there enjoying the village and the Cornish scenery.

Then we headed north to spend the next week in Gloucestershire in a 200 year old 2 story country cottage at the end of a country lane.

Then we traveled to North Wales, enjoying the marvelous scenery along the way. There we

had a more modern 1940's style two bedroom bungalow. After a week, we took a ferry to Ireland and spent five days touring. Next, we headed for the Lake District in the North of England. We rented a country cottage on 1,500 acres, owned for the past 300 years by the Lord Cavendish Family. After an enjoyable week of visiting the lakes and gardens, we headed north to Edinburgh, Scotland for the start of the Rally.

The huge array of 284 cars was spectacular including marques that I have only seen in magazines like a 1933 Volvo Cabriolet, 1937 Mercedes 170V Convertible, 1938 BMW, 1937 SS Jaguar, 1935 Mercedes 500K, 1934 Aston Martin Mark II, 1937 Mercedes 540K, 1938 Alvis 4.3 litre, 1938 Lagonda and many others including Packards, Cadillacs, Stanley Steamer etc. There were many photographs taken wherever the cars went. The first day we traveled 130 miles, returning to Edinburgh.

The next day, Sunday, was a more picturesque and scenic trip of 127 miles through Scottish mountains and lake area with beaches before returning to Edinburgh.

Monday was a long rally day with many competitors not worrying about the time schedule anymore, but just relaxing and enjoying the countryside and villages we were passing through. We traveled 182 miles with an overnight stop at Windermere, England. There we attended a reception held on a large ferry cruising on Lake Windermere before retiring to our hotels.

Tuesday we traveled 144 miles from Windermere to York via the Holker Hall Museum with a replica of Sir Malcolm Campbell's Bluebird car and speedboat.

Wednesday was a free day. Thursday we left York on a 141 mile trip to Nottingham. It was a long day with intense navigating.



Friday we traveled 97 miles to our destination, Stratford-Upon-Avon. On the way we visited the museum at Donington Race Track and allowed to do one lap of the track at your personal choice of speed. On arrival at Stratford, we were welcomed by the Lord Mayor dressed up in costume driving a replica of the Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang car. Saturday was a short run of 32 miles to Gaydon Museum for the concours, duly won by a lovely 1930 Packard Roadster from the USA. Sunday we toured Stratford and William Shakespeare's house.

Monday we headed down the Motorway to Cookham where we spent the night with friends

at their Manor Home. That evening they hosted us at the Savoy Hotel in London for an unforgettable dinner.

Tuesday was our last day in England, so the Buick had to be taken to the Depot for shipment back to Australia. It performed great, covering 4270 miles over a seven week period at 14 miles per gallon. We only had to replace two spark plugs, one set of points and a tyre tube. The Buick was very reliable, comfortable and easy to drive, keeping up with the traffic at all times.

We flew back via Hong Kong and arrived home in Melbourne exactly eight weeks after we left. It's a trip we'll always remember.

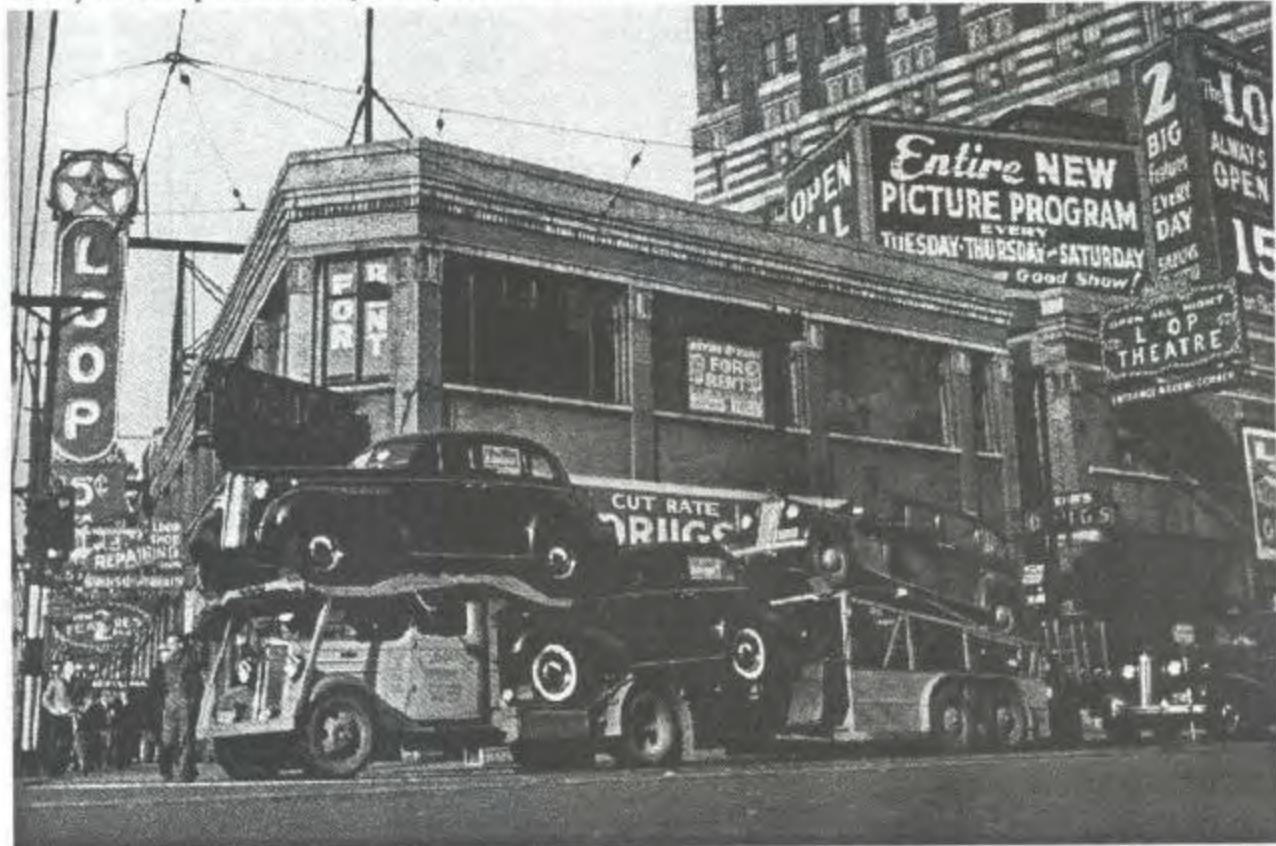
# PhotoA FROM THE PAST

This photo below shows new 1937 Buicks being transported through the Loop section of Chicago in 1936. The truck is a Chevrolet. The two front Buicks have the same paper sign in their rear windows and also do not have their front or rear bumpers installed yet. This photo was taken by John Gutmann and is from his book "The Restless Decade, John Gutmann's Photographs of the Thirties." Thanks to **Anthony Wright** (#1192) in New York City for sharing this. Anthony says the book has recently been republished by Harry Abrams, Inc.

You can buy it for a little under \$20.00 at Crown Books. Anthony thinks it is THE great photo documentary of the 1930's.

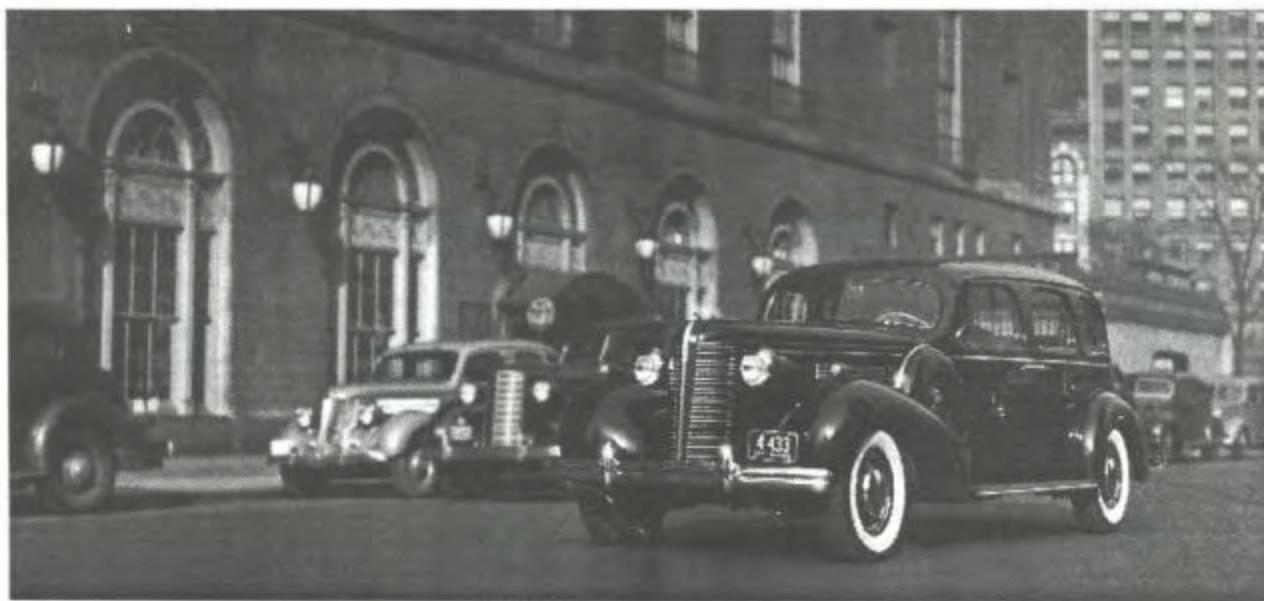
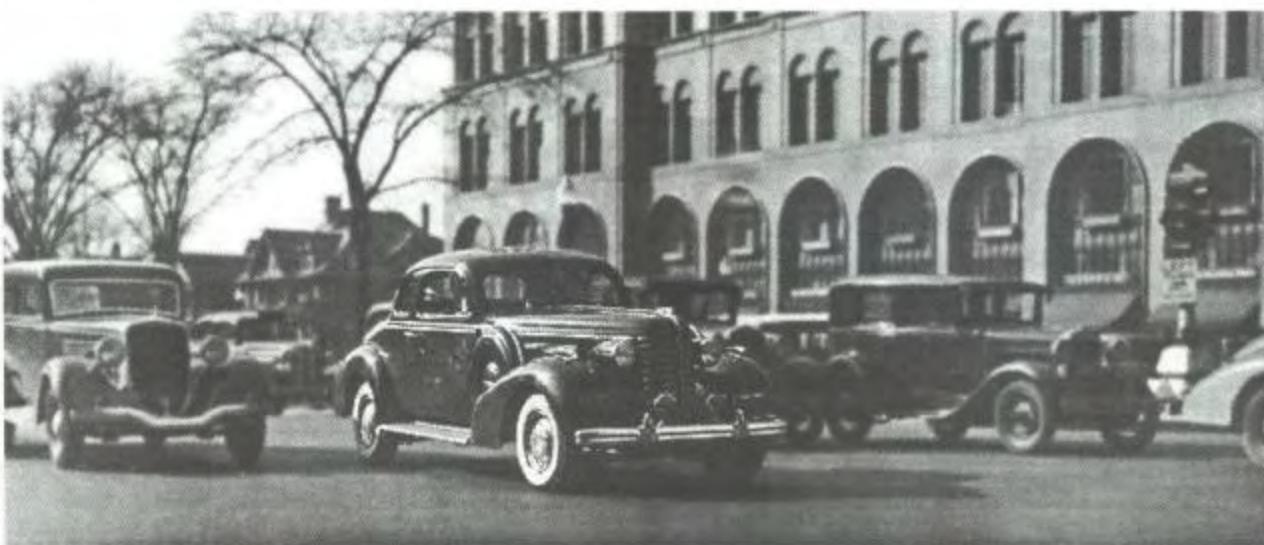
Baseball legend Lou Gehrig was voted "The Most Popular First Baseman" in a nationwide poll. Here Lou receives his prize (*top of page 13*), a new Buick Special Sedan at Yankee Stadium, New York City in the summer of 1938.

(ED. Thanks to **Steve De Clario** (#59) in New Jersey for sharing this photo with us. Steve sent the photo (JPEG format) and caption over the Internet).



These next two period photos (*middle & bottom of page 13*) are from the GM Archives. First we see a '37 Buick Coupe with sidemounts and fog lights in traffic along W. Grand

Bld in Detroit, MI. The last GM photo shows a '37 Roadmaster or Limited with 1937 Michigan plates, whitewalls (*on both sides of the tires*), sidemounts and an ivory steering wheel.



# 1938 Roadmaster

MODEL 81 FOUR DOOR SEDAN

## FACTORY PHOTOS



1938 Roadmasters and Limiteds look similar from the side, but are easy to tell apart by the different rear quarter windows. The Roadmaster's slides while the Limited has a hinged wind wing at the front of the quarter window. Also the wheelbase is different (133" vs 140"). Buick built nearly five thousand Roadmaster Model 81's.

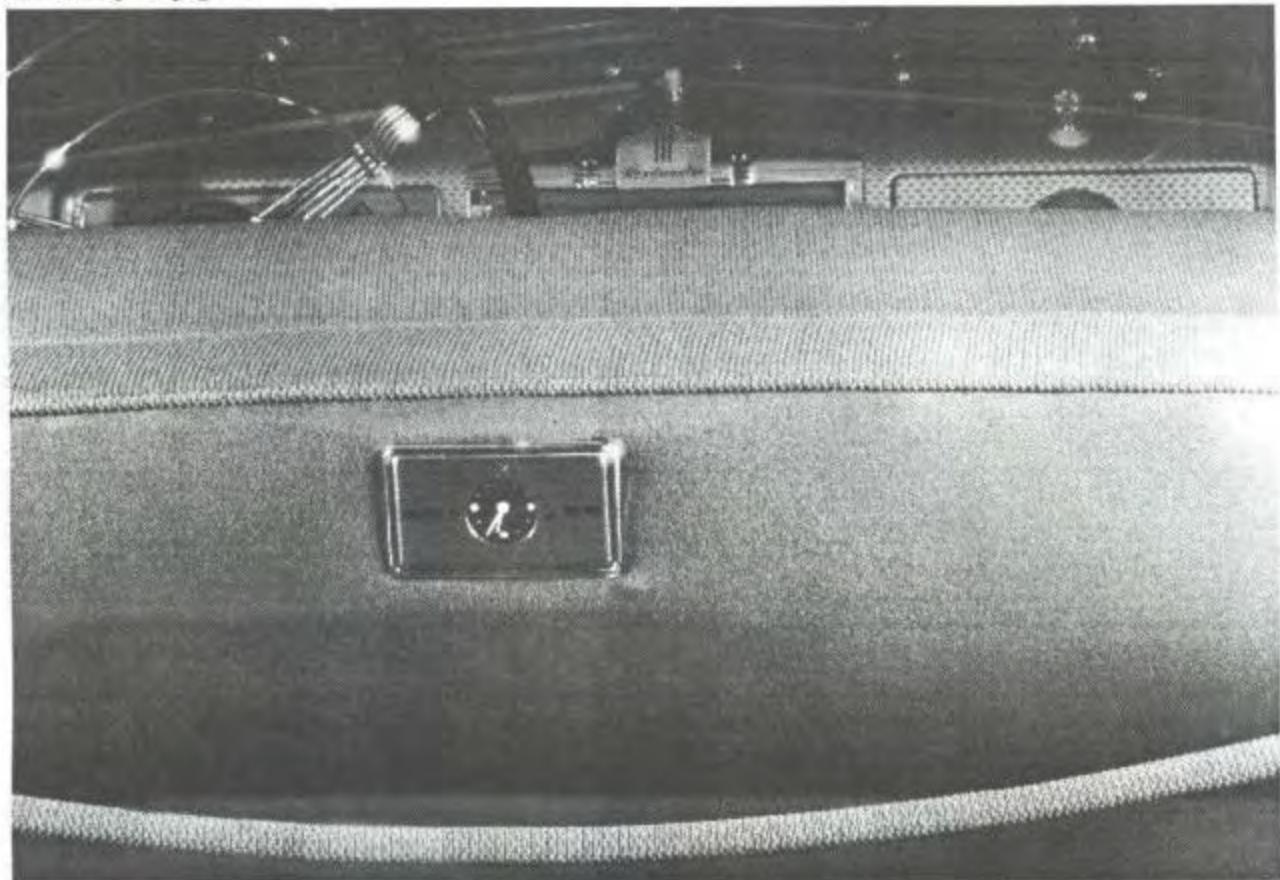


The passenger is adjusting the sliding rear quarter window. Note her hat with a feather sticking out of it. Très chic!

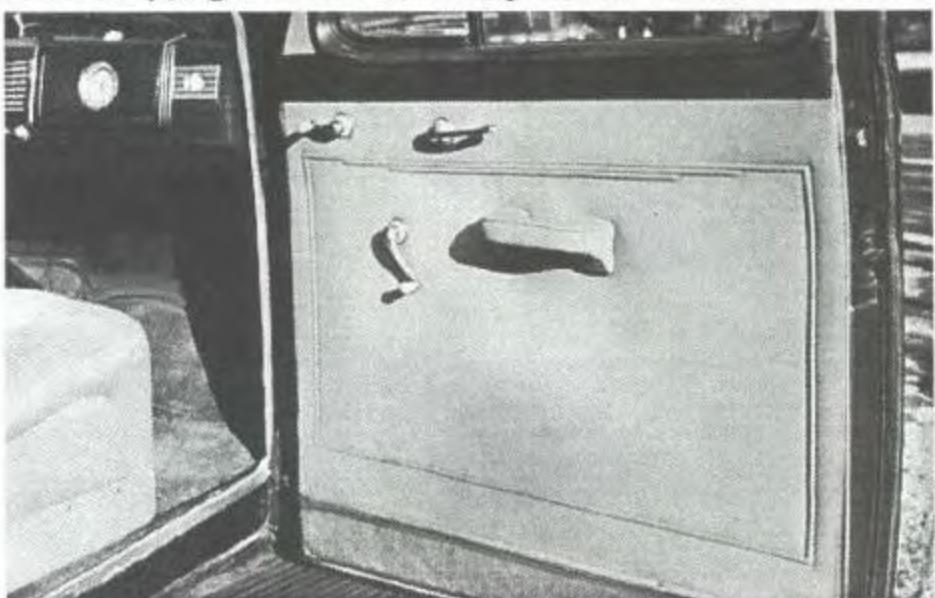


Another passenger exits the car. Note she is wearing leather gloves and her coat's wide collar with flowers pinned to it. The rear floor is carpeted. The few original Roadmaster's I've seen have a different upholstery pattern than the one shown on the door of this early '38 Roadmaster. The original photo also shows some of the interior plastic pieces such as the window crank handles and escutcheons are a lighter color than some of the repro plastics seen today. Also it's hard to see in this halftone photo but the original photo shows a dome light switch plate on the drivers door post.

(continued from page 15)



This Roadmaster has the chevron instead of the more common woodgrained dash. The chevron dash was used only on Centuries, Roadmasters and probably the Limited. The steering wheel is mahogany, the map light cover shows it's a ROADMASTER and there is a key in the glovebox lock. The car has the accessory Jaeger mechanical wind-up clock on the back of the front seat.



This I believe to be the standard '38 Roadmaster door pattern. This photo shows the original front door upholstery on Jim Flack's 38-81F formal sedan. It also matches the Roadmaster upholstery pattern shown in the '38 Buick Catalog.

# BUICK BUILDS \$5,000,000 TRANSMISSION PLANT

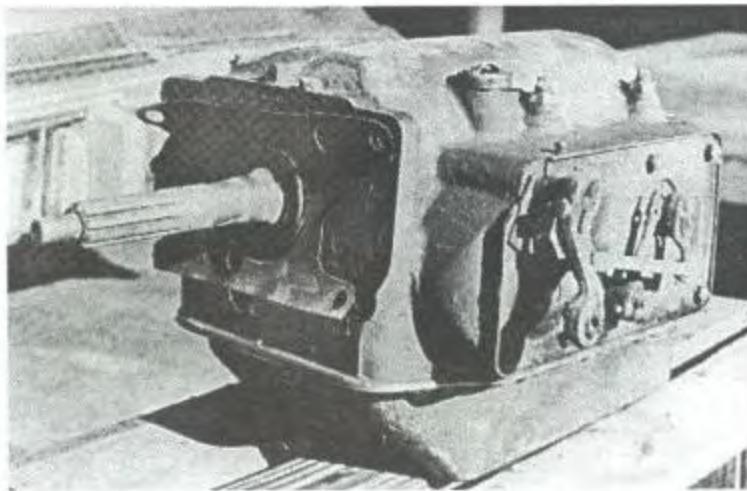
From the October, 1937 Buick Magazine

New Self-shifting transmission to be an optional feature on all Series 40 models at moderate extra cost

A vast new plant has swung into action at Buick. Batteries of the latest precision machines are turning out self shifting transmissions. After months of research, thousands of miles of testing, after an expenditure of five million dollars, Buick has perfected for you one of the most outstanding features of the year: a self-shifting transmission of proved performance.

Just a flick of the fingers and the car automatically shifts through necessary gear changes in ordinary driving. The simple control lever under the wheel takes the place of the conventional gearshift lever. The new self-shifting transmission is built into Series 40 models at the factory at extra cost.

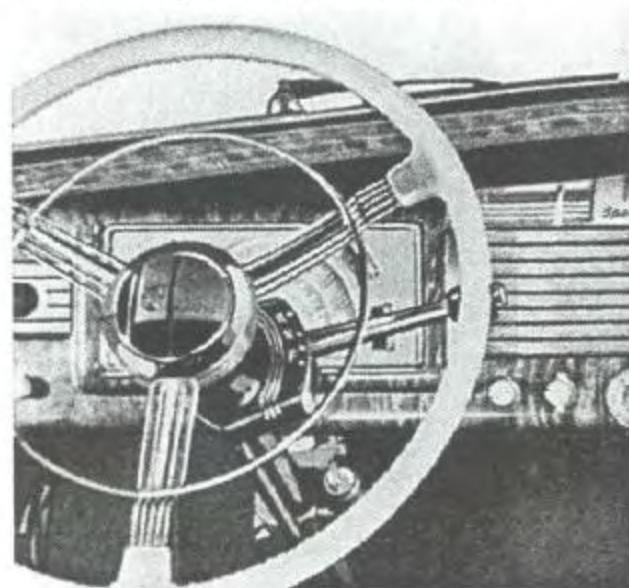
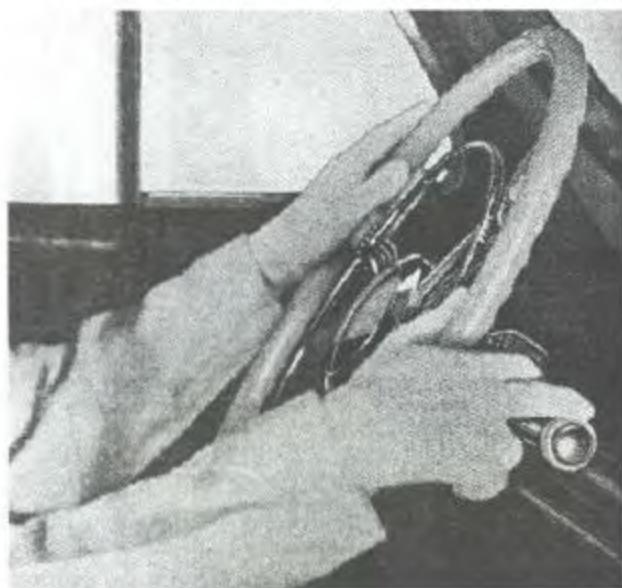
With the gearshift lever banished by Buick's new self-shifting transmission, there is more room than ever in this big front compartment of



the (1938) Series 40. The driver and two passengers can ride here in perfect comfort. There is no crowding on the deep, wide seat, and there is plenty of footroom for three.

Eliminating the conventional gearshift lever entirely, with simple control lever taking its place, Buick's new self-shifting transmission is available on all Series 40 models at extra cost. For all ordinary driving, a single motion of the control lever suffices; the car automatically shifts through necessary gear changes thereafter.

With this new self-shifting transmission, ninety percent of normal driving is in a new fourth speed, giving added quiet because engine speed is greatly reduced. Braking power of second is instantly available. Gasoline economy is increased nearly eight per cent, oil economy even more, and clutch operation is reduced by two thirds. With the gearshift lever removed from the center, the front compartment now carries three passengers with perfect comfort.



# THE BUICK *Self-Shifting* TRANSMISSION

By Jim Campbell (#134)

(Reprinted from Vol. III No. 6 Torque Tube April, 1985)

The self-shifter was offered by Buick only in 1938 and only in the 40 series. Buick called it the "Self-Shifting" transmission. Olds offered essentially the same transmission in 1937, 1938 and 1939.

I guess my first exposure to a Buick self-shifter was in the late 1940's when a body-man who worked in my dad's Buick agency was trying to obtain parts for his 1938 Special coupe. Even at that time, parts were scarce for these units. Eventually this car was converted to a conventional syncromesh transmission, as I'm sure was the fate for many of these vehicles. My interest was further stimulated a year later when I happened onto one of the original operation and overhaul manuals for the 1938 self-shifter.

I've seen less than ten 1938 Buicks and perhaps twenty-five Oldsmobiles (1937 through 1939) equipped with the semi-automatic transmission including my own car. It is a black model 41 4-Door sedan with radio, heater, and taupe mohair interior and had about 45,000 miles on the odometer when purchased in 1973.



The original owner was a grocer in Waterbury, CT, who stored the car in a basement-level garage under his store which helped to preserve the woodgrain, interior and window channel rubber. Unfortunately, he was very short and in his late 70's, and had a difficult time with parking maneuvers. He managed to dent all the fenders at least once. He sold the '38 in 1969 and then purchased a new Buick Special.

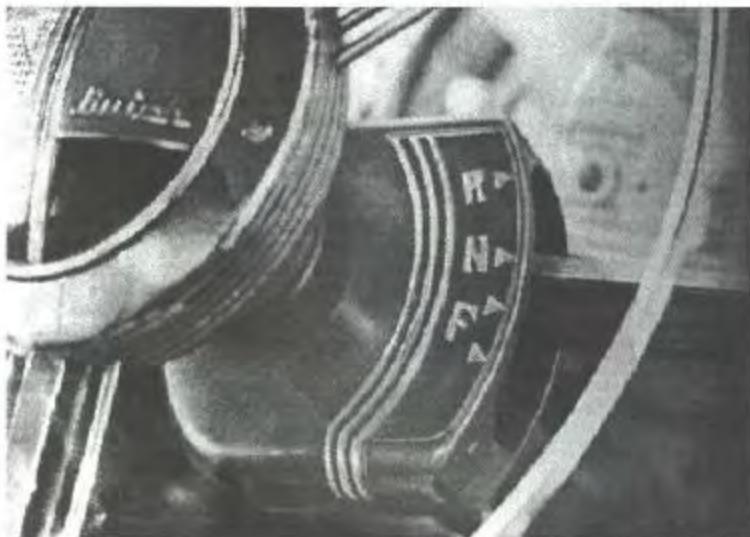
The next owners were a couple in Simsbury, CT. The wife used it as an occasional second car for several years. Then they sold the car to me in 1973.

My wife also used the car occasionally after I rebuilt the brakes and the self-shifting transmission. At the time of the transmission rebuild, I had obtained another semi-automatic transmission from a '38 Olds which had incorporated many of the suggested service changes, including a rear servo check valve; and I was able to mix and match the best components from each to make a nice unit.

Driving the semi is a combination of manual and automatic transmission operation. There is reverse, neutral, and two forward operating

ranges... "low range" which limits operation to first and second gear; and "high range" which has first, third and fourth gears. First gear in "high range" is a quirk of the design. The transmission is always in first before the car picks up speed to develop enough oil pressure to enable hydraulic shifts to be made.

Garage maneuvers are exactly like a manual transmission since the clutch pedal must be used to start the vehicle, go forward or reverse. Once the clutch pedal is used to start forward motion, the car is fully automatic, progressing from first to second gear and continuing in sec-

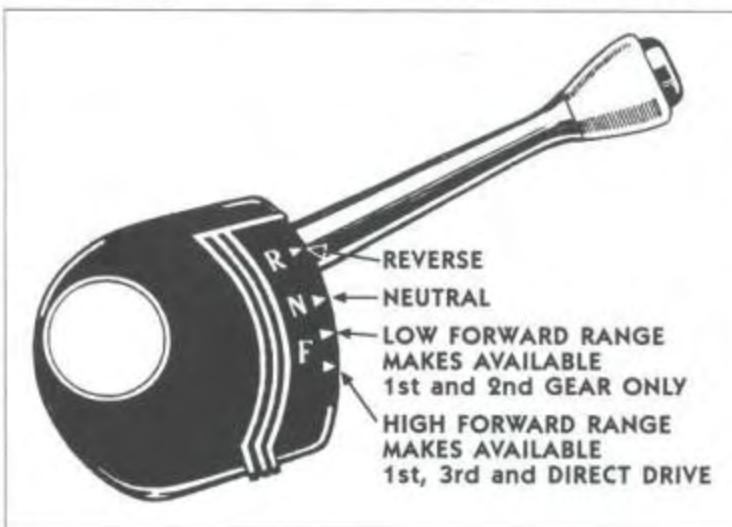


very much like current automatics.

Some of our members who own self-shifters are:

- Fred Graybeal (#1124)
- Jim Campbell Jr. (#134)
- Chris Patrick (#1247)

If you own a self-shifter and are not on this list, please let me know. Thanks.



### Key facts:

- Option cost \$59.75 in 1938
- 3,880 Buick self-shifters were built out of 143,301 1938 Specials or about 3%.
- Olds estimates about 7% of its cars had this transmission. Olds introduced it in the late '37 model year on straight eights, and it was available in 1938 and 1939 on both sixes and eights.
- All the semi-automatic transmission for both Buick and Olds were built in Buick's factory, around 30,000 total, 1937 through 1939. The core of engineers at Olds and Buick who developed the semi went on to staff the Detroit Transmission Division of GM, currently known as the Hydramatic Division.

**Components** that differ between self-shifter and the standard transmission on '38 Specials:

- Bell housing
- Clutch disc
- Clutch release bearing support and washer
- Transmission mount and steady rest
- Torque tube and propeller shaft (*shorter*) and axle ratio changed from 4.4 to 3.6.
- Mast jacket (column shift)
- Front floor center panel (*without shift lever hole*)
- Floormat
- Combination fuel/vacuum pump (*like on Big Series cars*)
- Speedometer drive (*cable length*)



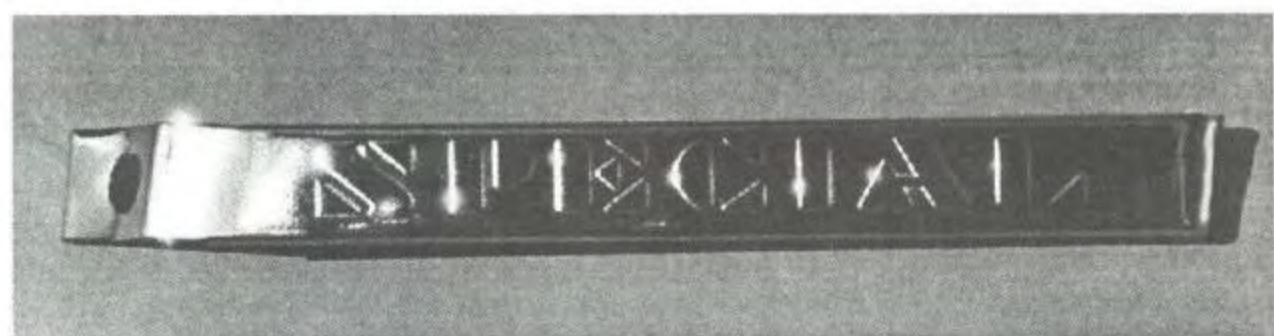
## Technical TIPS

# 1937 HOOD LOUVER NAMEPLATES

By Harry Logan (#651)



These are photos of original 1937 hood louver nameplates. They are made of thin brass with the name in raised chrome letters on a silver background. It's the same silver color as the louvers. Some members believe only the CENTURY had this nameplate, but it was used on all four series.



I restored mine by first having the original re-chromed, then painting the background with a silver Pilot brand permanent marker pen I bought at a stationary store. Model airplane stores sell a Testor brand paint pen that I also use. It comes in many colors. If possible, choose a fine tip instead of a bold tip pen. This makes it easier to outline letters without running into the raised chrome lettering. Mine still looks good over two years later. (See page 26 of the January/February 1996 *Special Interest Autos* (issue #151) magazine or page 21 of the July/August 1994 *Torque Tube*).

# CRANKCASE VENTILATION—AIR CONDITIONING FOR THE ENGINE

(Reprinted from the July, 1938 Buick Magazine)

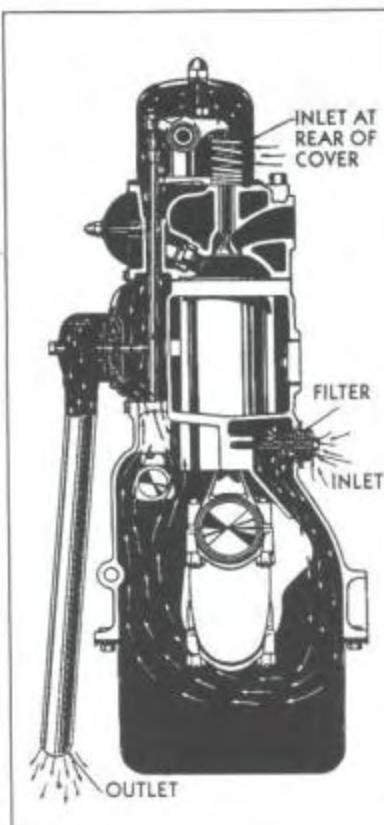
When gasoline is burned in the cylinders, one of the by-products is water—slightly more than a gallon for every gallon of gasoline. Most of this water, as vapor, escapes through the exhaust pipe; but a small amount may leak past the rings and pistons and condense in the crankcase. If left there, it may cause the crankcase oil to sludge. Moreover, it will combine with sulfur oxides (another by-product of combustion) to form acid fumes which are injurious to engine parts.

As you see in the diagram, Buick's ventilating system uses the crankshaft as a blower to force these harmful fumes out through the ventilator outlet pipe. Fumes are also forced out of the crankcase by the inlet opening to the crankcase being under the hood, in a region of high pressure,

while the outlet is under the car, in a region of low pressure, causing a natural flow, which is accelerated by the crankshaft acting as a blower. This system has done much to prolong engine life.

(ED: One of the inlets to the crankcase ventilation system consists of louvers at the back of 1937 & 1938 Buick valve covers. From late 1938 on, these louvers were eliminated and the inlet became part of the valve cover oil filler cap. This cap is about 2 inches high (5 cm) and has steel gauze in it to act as an air filter.

Sometimes members replace the original flat cap with the later tall one with the inlet holes in it but don't seal the inlet slots at the back of the valve cover. Now you have three inlets to the crankcase ventilation sys-



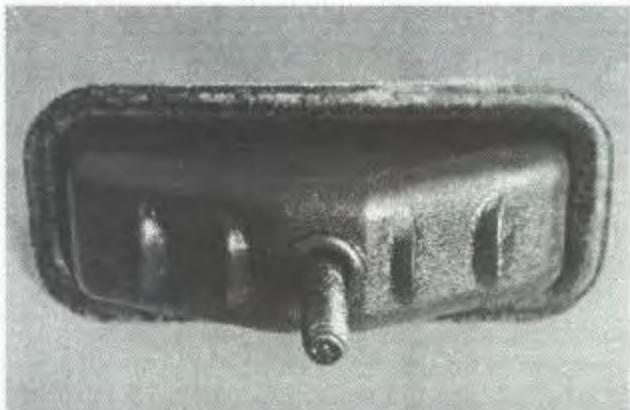
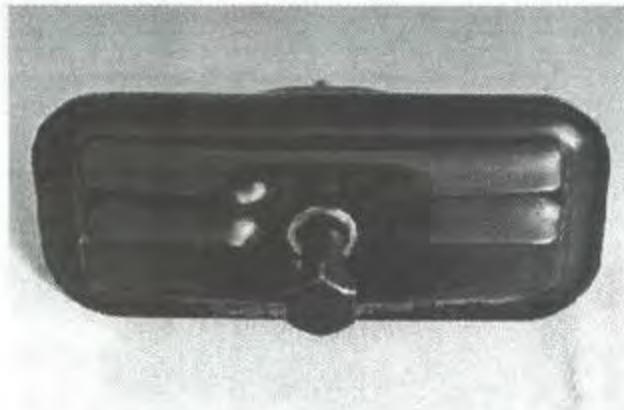


## Technical TIPS

# ENGINE BREATHER MODIFICATION

By Rick Wilson (#539)

(ED: I am reprinting this from an earlier Torque Tube as it ties in with the preceding article on The Crankcase Ventilation System. Also, I have found it very useful and have made this modification to my '37 & '38 Buicks.)



While rebuilding my '37 Century engine, I discovered that the crankcase breather unit (*on the left side of the block*) was sealed at the factory. This makes it impossible to change the filter element. The only way to clean the filter is to periodically soak the complete unit in solvent. I suppose that worked well enough by the standards of the time, but nowadays we like to CHANGE filters, not just clean and re-use them. Besides, I'd just spent a considerable amount of money to rebuild my engine and I didn't relish the idea of using a filter that was almost 60 years old!

After studying the problem for a while, I came up with a way to modify the breather unit so the filter element can be changed, yet the installed unit shows no outward sign of modification. I believe this procedure can only improve the performance and reliability of the old straight 8, as it insures that clean unrestricted air passes through the crankcase. The breather filter can be changed each time you change your oil, or whenever you choose. (photos above show both the front and back of this crankcase breather unit.)

The modification is simple and only costs a



(continued from page 22)

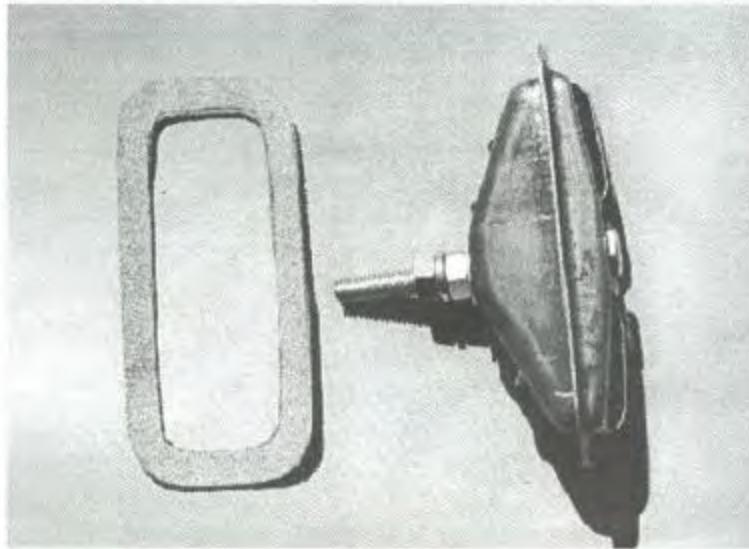
few dollars. About half that cost is for the filter material, but you get enough material for six or seven changes. So, you can see the cost is more than reasonable.

The breather housing has two pieces: front and back (*bottom of page 22*). These two pieces are held together by a ferrule which is flanged on each end. A bolt passes through the ferrule to attach the breather unit to the crankcase. This 3" long 5/16-18 bolt must be replaced by a bolt of the same size and length, but the new bolt must have threads at least half the length of the bolt.

The bolt stock I used was fully threaded. You could also add threads to the original bolt if you have a 5/16-18 die.

You'll also need two nuts, and a flat washer. A lock washer to go between the two nuts is optional. You can get these items at your local hardware store. While there, also get a packet of 3-M stripping pads. They come in green or red. Take your pick. These are your new filters.

To make the modification, the ferrule flange on the back side of the unit must be removed. Carefully grind or file the flange off. Once the flange is removed, the breather unit easily separates. With the breather unit apart, you can remove and dispose of the old hogs hair type filter.



Then cut a short piece of the 3-M pad to fit the bottom of the breather housing and a longer piece to fit over the first piece. Put holes in the centers of the filter material to allow the bolt and ferrule to pass through. I suggest you dip the filter material in light oil, shaking off the excess. Dirt in the air passing through this filter will tend to cling to the oil.

Now reassemble the breather housing with the new filters and pass the new bolt through the unit.

Place the flat washer over the bolt and turn the nut until it is snug against the flat washer at the back of the housing. Now tighten the second nut against the first nut. A lock washer between these nuts is optional. With

these nuts tightened properly, the housing pieces are held firmly together, yet the bolt will still turn freely, enabling it to be threaded into the engine block. When mounted to the engine block, this improved breather unit shows no sign of modification.

(ED: It's a good idea to install the breather using a cork gasket for a good seal. With the unit apart, lay the cover on some sheet cork and trace its outline. Then cut it out with scissors. Next cut out the center portion about a 1/4" from the edge to finish making the gasket.)

## 1937 BUICK HOOD ALIGNMENT

(From the November, 1937 MOTOR AGE Magazine)

Four adjustments are provided to align the hood on 1937 Buick cars:

1. Spacing washers can be added or removed from between the radiator cross rod and clamps can be shifted.

2. The grille can be raised or lowered to meet the hood by loosening the grille mounting screws.

3. The radiator can be shifted by loosening the bolts at the fender irons and the radiator at

the front cross member. The extent of this shifting is limited by the clearance in the front fender iron holes.

4. The strut rods can be lengthened or shortened. If these rods are used to push or pull the radiator assembly, forcibly, it is likely to result in distorting the radiator shell assembly and cause a type of misalignment which cannot be corrected by adjustment.



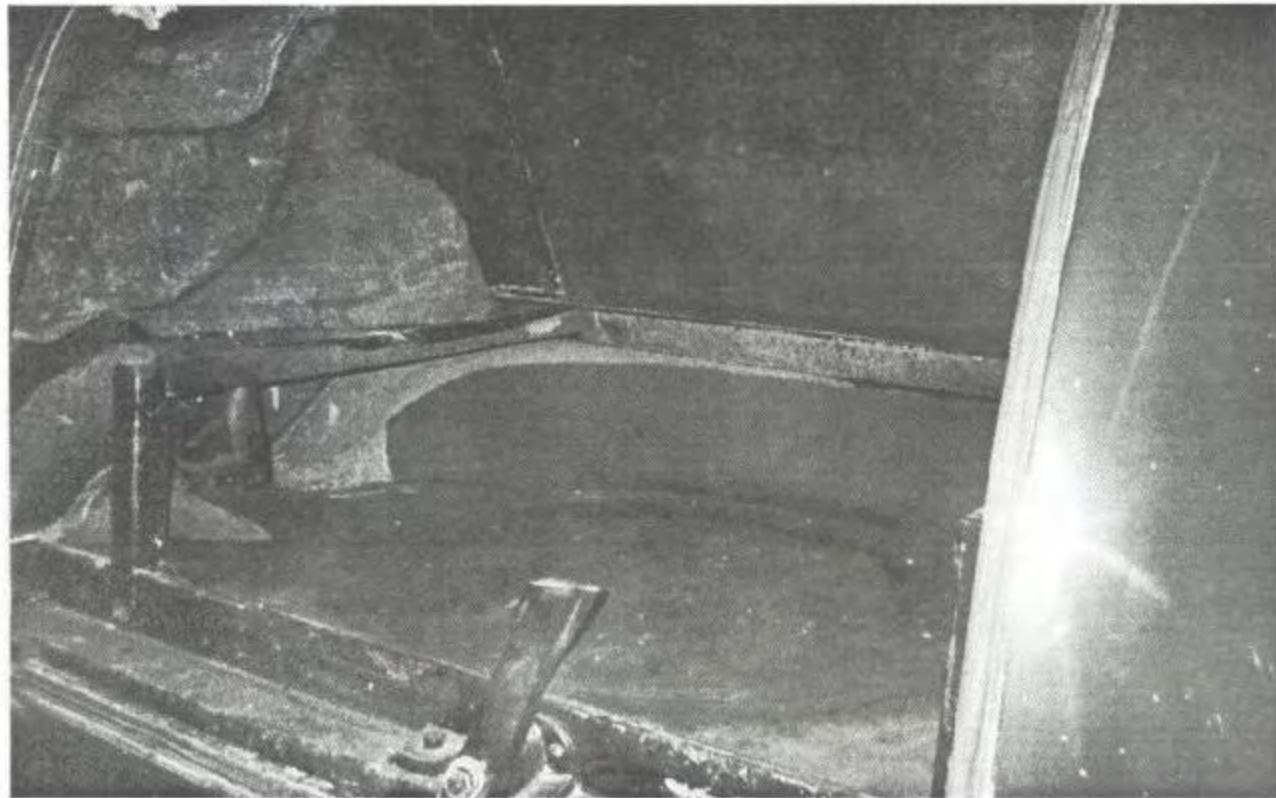
## Technical TIPS

# ORIGINAL SEDAN TRUNK

Photos by James Rufener (#767) Egan, MN  
Story by Harry Logan (#651)



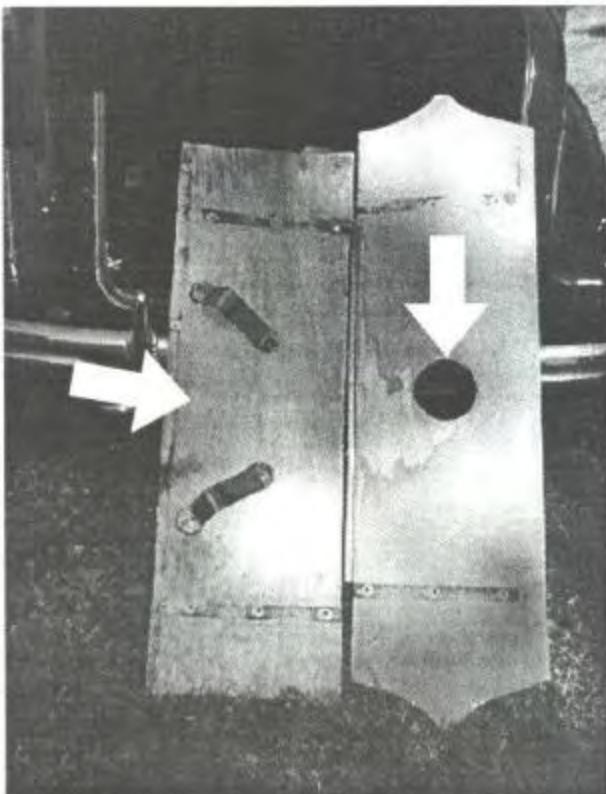
This '38 Special 4-Door Sedan Model 41 belongs to **James Rufener** (#767). He recently purchased the skirts from new member **Karl Bosk** (#1154).



(continued from page 24)

Here's the trunk with the spare and plywood shelf boards removed (bottom of page 24). Only cars with plain fenders had the wooden shelf, metal shelf supports and the tire hold-down clamp. Note the original burlap lining that goes over each fender. You can buy reproduction trunk lining cut to fit from Lewis Jenkins, PO Box 2428, North Wilkesboro, NC 28659. Phone (910) 667-4282. The trunk lining for a plain fendered car is different than for a sidemounted car, so be sure to order the correct one.

Cars with factory sidemounts had a larger trunk because of the absence of the shelf and support brackets. So if your car has a trunk shelf and sidemounts, then someone has added the sidemounts. This is a common practice and not a cause for concern.

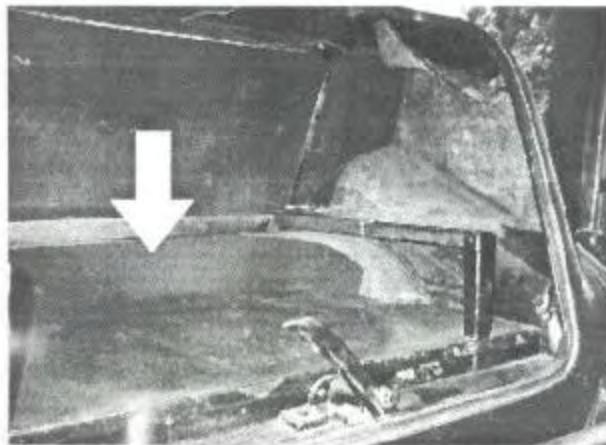
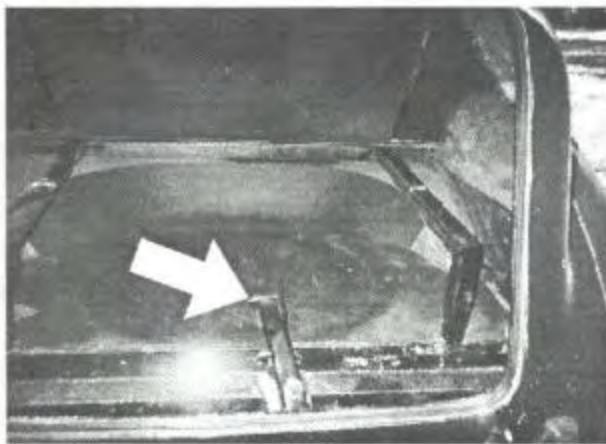


In the photo, at right, you see the bottom side of two plywood boards with wear marks where it rests on its support brackets.

The board with the hole (right arrow) is positioned to the rear of the car. The hole is the access for filling the spare with air.

The inner board (left arrow) has two metal brackets or stops that hang down for the spare tire to rest against when it's clamped in place (see arrow in middle photo). The shelf board was varnished, not painted on James's car.

The two bottom photos show the original trunk. Note the pressed paper material glued to the back of the trunk (see arrow) where the tire tread hits. Except for the burlap lining sections on both sides, most everything in the trunk is painted black.

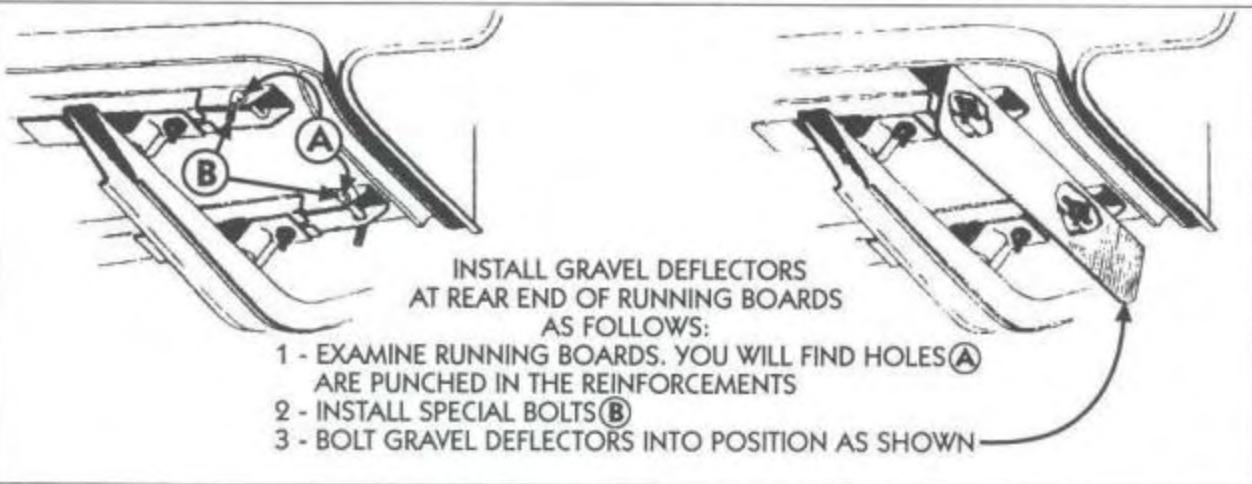




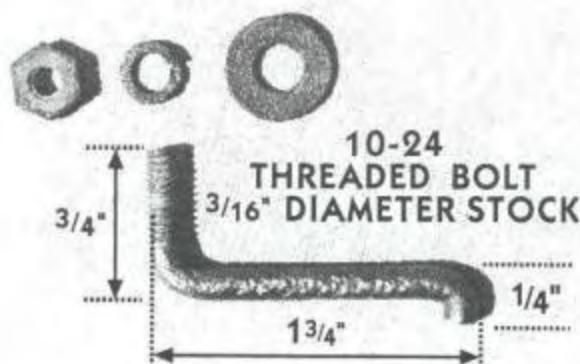
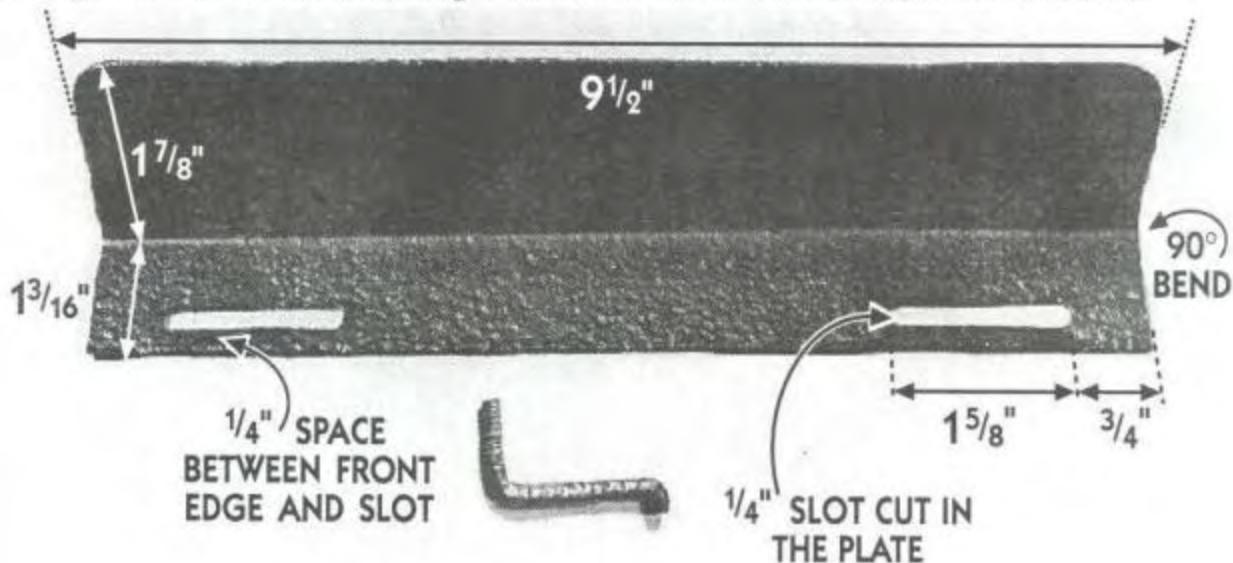
# Technical TIPS

By Harry Logan (#651)

## RUNNING BOARD GRAVEL DEFLECTORS



These gravel deflectors were factory mounted on the underside of the running boards close to the rear edge. Most 37/38 Buicks no longer have them, but the holes to install them are there.



This is what an original deflector looks like. Reproduction ones can be easily made out of #16 gauge sheet metal with the dimensions shown.

They are attached to the running boards with 10-24 bolts bent as shown. Now you won't lose any points at the next car show!

Harold Naber (#1250)  
11125 U.S. Hwy 24  
Falcon, CO 80831

Sally Emelander (#1251)  
3937 Vermae Dr.  
Holland, MI 49424  
38-41

James Jolly (#1252)  
PO box 2295  
Shelton, WA 98584

Raphael Winzin (#1253)  
138 Pryor Avenue  
Tonwanda, NY 14150  
38-46C

Dan Rupp (#1254)  
PO Box 771  
Marquette, MI 49855

Harvard Schultz (#1255)  
2524 Mulberry  
Yankton, SD 57078

## WELCOME NEW Members

Jerry Hanscum (#1256)  
21603 Beauford Lane  
Northville, MI 48167  
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Butch Leonard (#1257)  
3232 8th Ave. S. Box 23164  
Seattle, WA 98124

Roddy Pearce (#1258)  
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A. Valentino (#1259)  
152 Paradise Ave.  
Hamden, CT 06514  
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Willard Lundgren (#1260)  
1419 Bath Ave.  
Brooklyn, NY 11228

Matt Davis (#1261)  
4708 S. Evanston Pl.  
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Chuck Bidwell (#1262)  
835 Windjammer Lane  
Mound, MN 55364  
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Marshall England (#1263)  
6161 River Rd. #48  
Richmond, VA 23226

Joe Dertinger (#1264)  
21322 McItosh Lane  
Lake Forrest, CA 92630  
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Ted Taylor (#792)\*  
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### • Runningboard Cores, Metal Repros

close to original in detail, excellent if doing own rubber.....\$250.00 pair

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All parts plus shipping

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### • 1938 PARTS

Front Bumper Medallion, needs restoration.....\$75.00

38-80C Roadmaster Phaeton Showroom Poster. Beautifully framed & matted, perfect....\$250.00

Vince Truant (#1220)  
1537 Charmouth Rd.  
Lutherville, MD 21093 (410) 321-1938

---

### • 1937 PARTS

1937 Blue Dot tail lights.....\$175.00

(714) 843-6969 in Southern California (This ad seen in a local newspaper)

# *Parts* FOR SALE

## • 1937-1938 PARTS

Radiator, hood and bumper for 1937. Interior & exterior trim. Tailights & parking lights, mirrors, gauges, cloisonné and a lot more. SASE for complete 1937-1938 List.

Al Bell (#1061)  
124 E. Colby St.  
Whitehall, MI 49461  
(616) 894-2629

## • 1937 SPECIAL PARTS

Running boards, original rubber in excellent condition. Bottoms restored. Running board stainless mouldings, some dents and screws.

Front bumper, triple chromed, bumper brackets, restored  
1937 Owners Manual

1937 Body By Fisher Service Manual

The Bugle Magazine, 1981: Volume 16 #2 through #12, Volume 17 #1 and #2

The Torque Tube:

Volume I #1 through #10 '82  
Volume II #1 through #10 '83-'84  
Volume III #1 through #9 '84-'85  
Volume IV #1 through #9 '85-'86

*Make Offer*

Scott Peck  
3995 So. Sheri Way  
Salt Lake City, UT 84120  
(801) 977-9979 work    (801) 969-1498 home

# *Parts* WANTED

## WANTED:

• For a ROADMASTER convertible sedan. Two 1937 Door Handles. Must have 3 5/8" shank.

Hal Durian (#818)  
1705 Bridgeport  
Claremont, CA. 91711  
(909) 624-0338

## WANTED:

• Need for 1937 ROADMASTER Sedan  
Rear bumper  
Gravel pan  
Trunk handle

John Mapes (#1019)  
RR 1 Box 155B  
Roca, NE 68430  
(402) 792-2548

## WANTED:

• For 1937 CENTURY

Set of plain fenders with brackets, new or very good used.

Thanks  
David Kissileff (#1234)  
154 Lismore Ave.  
Glenside, PA. 19038  
(215) 884-9614

## WANTED:

• Sunvisor for my nice 1938 SPECIAL  
Thank You,

James Rufener (#767)  
1748 Karis Way  
Eagan, MN 55122-2671  
(612) 688-8058

# Cars FOR SALE

## FOR SALE:

- 1938 SPECIAL 4-Door Sedan Model 41  
Old restoration with new wood graining and interior, rebuilt 1941 engine. New wiring, correct rubber floor mat, slightly tinted glass, good tires. Needs paint, running board rubber, chrome redone and rear window shade. Sorry No sidemounts. Car has been stored inside its entire life. I am the third owner.

**\$3,500.00**

*Michael Scudder*

Rt. 2, Box 39

Hockley, TX (30 miles north of Houston)  
(281) 356-8594

## FOR SALE:

- 1938 McLaughlin SPECIAL  
4-Door Sedan Model 44-19. Restored, shown at 1996 Concours d'Elegance,

Amelia Island, FL

**\$15,000.00**

*Bill Gillespie (#874)*

6001-27 Argyle Forest Blve. #43

Jacksonville, FL 32244 (904) 779-2885



## FOR SALE:

- 1938 SPECIAL 4-Door Convertible Sedan. 60% restored. Many new parts. Excellent body with clear title. Located in Maryland. Delivery negotiable.

**\$10,000.00**

*David Bylsma (#117)*

7802 Chevalier Ct.

Severn, MD. 21144

(410) 551-7236

## FOR SALE:

- 1937 CENTURY 4-Door Streamline Sedan Model 67 Improvements since purchased in 1990 include:  
New radiator core, rebuilt water pump, fuel pump, carburetor and generator. Torque Tube resealed, rear axle bearings replaced, front shock absorbers rebuilt, new front springs, steering wheel recast by J.B. Donaldson, correct Y & Z wire harness and voltage regulator installed. Fuel tank boiled out and resealed. Running boards renovated, instruments and accessories functional. '37 California YOM license plates. Incorrect paint and interior. Plain fenders. Daily driver for many years. Interesting trades considered, 40's to 50's. Harley Davidson V twins, Panhead touring bike, 45 cu. in., Model K etc.

**\$5,000.00 or near offer.**

*George Canavan (#806)*

Los Altos, CA

(415) 967-4909

e-mail: *Canavan G @ aol.com*

## FOR SALE:

- 1937 SPECIAL 2-Door Trunk Back Sedan Model 48

Rebuilt motor, new tires. Used in many local weddings. Includes sidemount covers, radio and heater.

**\$11,500.00**

*Howard Vaillancourt*

Guilford, CT

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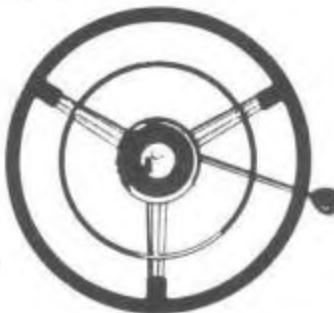
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Res. (206) 630-8887

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Clips.....WC-80.....\$.60 ea.  
DOOR BOTTOM SEAL  
Clip Type.....DW-369.....\$1.85 ft

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Ser. 80-90.....TW-371.....\$31.50  
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Ser. 40-60.....TW-371S.....\$31.50

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Sponge.....TL-369.....\$2.00 ft.  
1/2"x1"x16' TL-1129.....\$47.50

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Brown.....CB-343BN.....\$5.50 ea.

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FRONT END PARTS For 40-60 Series;  
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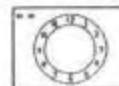
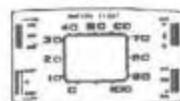


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\$20. Refundable if Returned Within  
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1938 TRUNK HANDLE/LIGHT MOUNTING  
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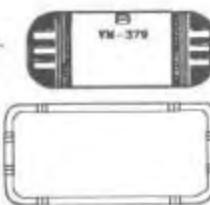


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ROUND PADS.....SP-338...\$10. pr.  
MOUNT.....MM-347..\$29. ea.



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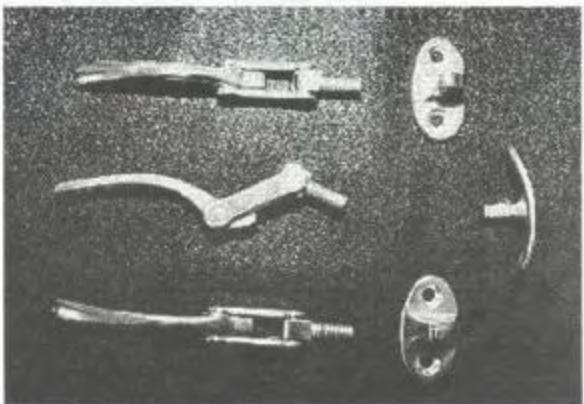


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